

STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2028

Risks & Mitigation

The Student Protection Plan is a document that is approved by the Office for Students (OfS) and a requirement for all Higher Education Providers. The plan sets out the measures we have in place to protect you as a student at NSCG should a risk to the continuation of your studies arise and it details how we would communicate with you regarding this.

NSCG has been providing high quality career focussed education for over 60 years; the risk that we are unable to fulfil our obligations and duties to you is very low, particularly as the College's financial performance has a demonstrable track record of being consistently strong.

These low risks can be summarised as follows:

- 1. The College as a whole is unable to operate.** RISK: Very Low.
The College has significant reserves and our ESFA financial health rating is 'Outstanding'. We are comfortably in the top 5% of FE Colleges nationally based on financial performance and reserves. We have a robust business continuity procedure that ensures the safety and welfare of all, minimises educational and administrative disruption within the College and would enable normal working to be resumed in the shortest possible time.
- 2. The College loses its designated status** (which allows UK/EU students to apply for tuition fees and maintenance loans). RISK: Very Low
If the College's designation is withdrawn, suspended or is not successfully renewed, and depending on the circumstances of de-designation, the College will appeal the decision/make a new application for designation with a view to the restoration of this for the coming academic year.

Where appropriate the College will also apply for "teach out designation", allowing you to continue to access student tuition and maintenance loans, including those making new loan applications, for the remainder of your studies. The College may also explore the alternate option of operating as a franchisee of another provider in order to restore student support. In the event of teach out designation not being granted, the College will endeavour to transfer existing eligible students, in receipt of or seeking loans, to an approved and designated alternative provider, should you so wish.

- 3. One of the College sites needs to close.** RISK: Very Low
The risk that we will no longer deliver courses at one of our two sites is very low but if required you would be taught at the alternate neighbouring site. Due to resource, academic, student experience or health and safety grounds it may be necessary to close a site and/or move courses between sites. Unless taken on the grounds of emergency relocation due to unanticipated events, or on the grounds of a material improvement of facilities, the College undertakes not to close a site or relocate a

course while teaching is underway for the academic year except in the event of exceptional circumstances where we will consult with you.

4. **The College is no longer able to offer a course to students due to reasons of financial non-viability.** RISK: Moderate

The College reserves the right, in the interests of financial viability, operational necessity or to improve the quality of the learning experience, to make reasonable alterations to courses. These may include (but not exclusively) altering timetables, tutors or venues, providing such alterations will not substantially affect the course content or qualification for which you have enrolled. At all times the College will communicate such changes to you (and your employers, where relevant) as soon as such changes have been agreed but with at least seven days' notice.

The College will consider whether a course should run or not in relation to student numbers and viability; usually a minimum number for a viable group is 12 or if there are 24 or more confirmed enrolments consideration would be given to opening a further group. The College will confirm any decisions relating to this as soon as possible. This will normally be at least seven days before the first formal lesson is due to take place. On occasion, the College reserves the right to postpone a course, aiming for it to commence later in the year.

5. **The College is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more courses.** RISK: Moderate

This relates specifically to delivery of courses in areas of particular vulnerability, such as single person dependencies for teaching. Although a moderate risk, it is currently unlikely that that we will no longer be able to deliver material components of our courses following the increased staffing resource across the merged college.

6. **A key member of staff leaves who could not be replaced.** RISK: Low/Moderate

This is a low risk, however, it is possible, in certain circumstances that we will need to replace staff as a matter of urgency. The services of a specialist staffing agency will be utilised as appropriate in order to locate new or temporary staff. Where the pursuance of temporary staff is unrealistic within the timescales of an academic year, then the College would extend term time for students if possible, to complete all work that is necessary with the appropriate staff.

The College currently offers a small number of courses, none of which are programmes in highly specialised areas. In addition, in the worst case scenario, the risk of being unable to redirect students to an alternative site or local HE provider is low.

Refunds

Refunds will be made where it is necessary to close a class due to insufficient numbers or where the attendance of students is made impossible or inappropriate by some action of the college. Should this action prove necessary, the refund will be processed as part of standard procedures, there should be no need to contact the college to request this.

The college will honour requests for a refund made in writing within 14 days of enrolment, where you or your employer change your mind and you withdraw from your programme of study.

Please refer to the College's Fee Policy, available on the website, for further information.

Communication with Students

NSCG will publish the Student Protection Plan on its website.

NSCG will continue to ensure that all academic and support staff involved in HE provision are aware of the implications of the consumer protection compliance in general and also the Student Protection Plan in particular through its committees (Board of Governors and the HE Strategy Group) and through the curriculum planning, course modification and closure of programmes and courses processes.

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with relevant student representative and the Students' Union for formal comment and approval. This will be approved by the Board of Governors which has student representatives as members. In the case of changes due to circumstances beyond the College's control (e.g. illness, sudden departure or death of a key member of staff), you will be informed as soon as practically possible.

The College will keep you informed through digital channels, by formal letters and where possible, through face-to-face meetings designed to assist you with understanding the nature and implications of such events and the Group's response to it/them. NSCG will ensure that you are either provided with, or signposted to, independent advice as appropriate to the given situation.

The College will always take reasonable steps to avoid implementing change during the academic year.

Complaints

Details regarding the College's Complaints Policy can be found on the website. This process may be used if you have a complaint about the way in which this plan is or is not being implemented, or the way in which you have been dealt with.